JOHN HART, DD.

1 Pet. 1. 24, 25. *All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, is as the flower of grass: the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.*

Chriſt's Firſt

SERMON,

OR

The abſolute neceſſity, Goſpel Duty and Chriſtian Practice of Repentance, Opened and Applied, by a godly, able, and faithful Miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt.

Wherein is diſcovered what Repentance is, and alſo the great neceſſity thereof to Salvation: with the great folly and deſperate madneſs of all thoſe that delay and put off Repentance unto a Sick Bed, or Old Age.

Together with the great Benefit, Joy, and Comfort that ſhall be to the Souls of all thoſe that timely and truly Repent.

The ſeventeenth Edition, with many Additions.

Matt. 4. 17.

From that time Jeſus began to preach and to ſay, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Luke 13. 3.

Except ye Repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

London, Printed for *T. Paſſinger*, *Will. Thackery*, *Phil. Brooksby*, and *John Williamſon*, 1679.

Christs First Sermon:

OR

The absolute Necessity, Duty, and Christian Practice of Repentance.

Acts 17. 30, 31. The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a Day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness.

THe Blessed Apostle Saint Paul in these words, Beloved, endeavours to take off the superstitious Athenians from their Idolatry and worshipping of false Gods, Gods of Silver and Gold which indeed are no Gods, but the works of mens hands: And this he doth, first by endeavouring to convince them of the folly of their Idolatry; and then secondly, in laying before them the power and goodness of God

in making and preserving the world; and all things therein. God (saith he in the foregoing Verses,) made the world and all things therein, and is Lord over all, and gives to all life and breath, and all things, and in him we all live, and move, and have our being; and it is he that hath set the bounds of our habitations. Therefore (saith he) you need not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stones, graven by art or mans device: for God is Lord both of heaven and earth. I, but say these Idolaters, (like some now adayes,) we did as our fore-fathers did, they worshipped such gods as these, and we are of the same religion as our fore-fathers were. But saith the Apostle, this was done in ignorance, and the time of this ignorance God winked at; your forefathers had not the light of the Gospel, they never heard of Jesus Christ: But now (saith he) Christ is preached, and the light of the Gospel shines forth in the world, therefore now ye must repent and turn from these Idols and serve the living God. Now God commands all men every where to repent, although God in times past suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways: Now hath he sent us to preach Christ unto you, that you should turn from these vanities, and serve the living God. If your forefathers sinned, it was through their ignorance and want of the know-

knowledge of Jesus Christ: but if you sin and go on in your Idolatry, 'tis through wilfulness, and God will be revenged on you. In the words you may observe these four things; first a duty commanded and that is repentance; secondly, the commander and that is God, God commandeth, thirdly, the persons to whom this command is enjoyned, and that is all men, every where, high and low, rich and poor, all the world over; fourthly and lastly, the time when, and that is now: now God commandeth all men every where to repent, now in these times of the Gospel: To day if you will hear my voice, saith God in Ps. 95. 7. From the words thus opened, I shall give you these four practical observations: The first is this, that Repentance is a needful and necessary duty commanded by God. Secondly, that every man and woman in the world is bound to repent. Thirdly, that the doctrine of the Gospel is a Doctrine of Repentance: It was Christs first Sermon as you may see, Mar. 4. 16. Jesus began to preach, and to say repent. Fourthly and lastly, observe from these words, that God expects more, and looks for more from men under the Gospel, than from those who never heard of the Gospel. These four observations are all of them very clear from the words of the Text, I shall only therefore give you some few further proofs of them from Scripture, and

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to proceed in the opening and handling of the two first observations, and from thence I shall draw sundry practical uses, which I shall endeavour, by Gods assistance, to apply home unto your souls. I shall therefore joyn the two first observations, in one intire proposition, thus, That repentance is a needful and necessary duty commanded by God, and that every man and woman in the world is bound to repent. Except ye repent (saith Christ, Luke 13.3.) ye shall all perish. And 2 Pet. 3. 9. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. As I live (saith the Lord, Ezek. 33.11). I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye dye, O house of Israel. And in Mat. 3. 2. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. And so likewise in Acts 2.38. Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. Repentance is needful for all, there are none so wise, none so learned, none so holy, but stand in need of repentance. In many things (saith St. James) we sin all, Jam. 3.2. And in Rom. 2.3. All have sinned. Young ones have sinned, and therefore have need to repent, and that betimes, lest as St. Paul saith Heb. 3. 13. Through the deceitfulness of sin their hearts be hardned. It's good for young ones, yea, it's the best course they can take,

take, as Solomon saith, Eccles. 12. 1. To remember their Creator in the days of their Youth; and not to put off repentance unto old age, or the death-bed, for then it may be too late: For although true repentance is never too late, yet late repentance is seldome true. It is a good observation of a holy man: saith he, speaking of the repentant Thief. God saved one at the last hour, that none might despair; and but one, that none might presume. Thou that wilt not repent when thou maist, it may be God will not give thee time to repent hereafter when thou wouldest: Dost thou think to doe that in thy old age, which thou wilt not do in thy youth? Canst thou do that in one hour on thy death-bed, which thou art not able to do sufficienly all thy life time? And then likewise old men have need of repentance, they have lived a long time in sin, and have long enough, yea, too too long neglected repentance: Young men may die soon, but old men cannot live long; therefore both young and old have need to repent, that they may receive the remission of their sins, Mark 1. 4. And for your better understanding of this great and necessary duty of repentance, I shall a little shew you what it is, and that briefly. Repentance is of two sorts, either real and unfeigned, or else seeming and hypocritical: seeming repentance that is common to wicked men, and is alt gether Le-

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gal, arising from the accusations of their own Consciences, such a repentance as this, was that of Judas; and then there is a real and unfeigned repentance, which doth properly belong to the godly, and this is likewise of two sorts, Legal and Evangelical: Legal repentance that comes from the Law giving us the sight of our sins, and our misery by sin, the Law is our School-master to bring us to Christ, Gal. 3.24. But Evangelical Repentance, that springs from faith in Christ, and carries out the soul unto Christ in opposition to every sin, and to a forsaking of every evil way: repentance then I shall thus describe: I say repentance is a gift of God by which a believing sinner being cast down in the sight and sense of his own sins, doth utterly forsake and abhor all his former evil ways, and turns to the Lord with a perfect heart.

I say it is a gift of God, that which comes from God and not from nature; it's a flower never grew in natures garden, neither birth nor breeding, neither art nor learning, nor any other sublunary power or qualification, is able to beget repentance: true repentance comes from above. Every good and perfect gift (saith St. James) comes from above, Jam. 1. 17. Grace doth not grow here below, but comes down from the Father of lights. The Apostles, Acts

11. 16. glorified God, that to the Gentiles he had granted repentance unto life. Repentance is the quickening of a dead soul, and therefore must be the act of him who is the giver of all life. We are all of us by nature dead in sins and trespasses, Ephes. the 2. and the 1. A man by nature is no more able to perform an act of true grace, than a dead person in the grave is able to do an act of nature. They that live in sin (as St. Paul saith of the widdow that lives in pleasure, 1 Tim. 5. 6.) are dead while they live. Repentance then is the gift of God, Acts 11. 18. God granted repentance unto life. So in 1 Tim. 2. 25. the Ministers of God are required to instruct those that oppose themselves, with meekness; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snares of the devil. It is said of Christ, Acts 5. 3. 1. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel. Faith and Repentance are supernatural works: and we may as well create new heavens and a new earth, as do these acts of ourselves, it is God alone that works them in our hearts by the efficacious operations of his Spirit, 2 Cor. 3. 5. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of our selves, but it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, Phil. 2. 13.

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Secondly, repentance is a change, first of the heart, then of the whole man: there must be a new heart, and a new hand; a new life, and a new head: all things must be new where Repentance is. If any man be in Christ (saith the Apostle,) he is a new Creature, 1 Cor. 5.17. Repentance makes a man a new man, and it is only in the power of God to renew our hearts, neither Angles nor Men are able to do it. In Jer. 31. 18, 19. saith Ephraim, Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Here is the character of a true Repentant, it is the Lord that must change our hearts, it is he only that must give us new hearts, and take from us these hearts of stone: it is the Lord that must pluck us out of the snares of the Devil, and cast down the strong holds of sin in us, if God do not turn us we shall never be turned. After that I was turned, I repented, saith Ephraim. But I proceed to the description of Repentance.

It's a gift of God, I say, whereby a believing sinner turns from all his sins unto God: I say a believing sinner, because faith must first precede and go before repentance, for none can truly repent, but he must first believe: there may

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be in a sinner that which we call Legal repentance, which may cause a sinner to fall out with his sins, and it may be to loath them with a kind of detestation: it's possible a wicked man may repent that ever he knew what sin meant, or that ever he had to do with sin; all this may be, and yet no true repentance, because no true faith: for true repentance causes a hatred of sin, as it is displeasing to God, as well as hurtful to our selves, yea, he hates sin as hell, yea, worse than hell it self, which cannot be in an unbelieving soul. It cannot be denyed but that repentance is a saving grace, and if so, then none can partake of this saving grace, till he first be united unto Christ the fountain of all grace: so then faith must needs be before repentance.

Secondly, where true repentance is, there is a change wrought in the whole man, and a turning, first, to our selves: secondly, to God: and thirdly, to man. An unrepentant sinner is out of himself, and he is not only out of his way, but out of his wits. In Luk. 15. 17. when the Prodigal came to himself, he said, Father I have sinned; this is the first step to repentance, self-returning. Secondly, repentance is a returning to God. If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord; return unto me, Jer. 4. 1. The grace of repentance is suitably expressed by this act of returning to God, and they who did not repent,

are said not to return to God. In Amos 4. 1. God saith, Notwithstanding I have given you cleanness of teeth and want of bread, yet have you not returned; notwithstanding I have with-holden the rain from you, and smitten you with blastings and mildew, and sent among you the pestilence: Notwithstanding I have slain your young men by the sword, and overthrown some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha by fire, yet have you not returned unto me saith the Lord. Repentance is a turning from sin to God. Sin turns men from God, and draws the soul into the wayes of death, James 1. 14. A man is drawn away of his own lusts and inticed; drawn away from God and from the truth of God; but when once Repentance comes, he turns back again, he changes his mind then, and abhors himself for what he hath done, Job 42. 6. I abhor my self and repent (saith Job) in dust and ashes. The Prodigal was drawn away from his fathers house through his own lusts, and yet at last he returned, first to himself, secondly to his father. Luke 15. 17. When he came to himself he said, I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

Sinners are said to be mad, but repentance brings men to their right wits again: every impenitent sinner is a mad man, a meer Bedlam;

lam; who but a mad man will run himself wilfully into the fire, as every wicked man doth, he runs headlong to destruction; but repentance turns men from this madness. In Acts 16. 18. it is called, A turning of men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Sin is a darkness, and when men sin they know not what they do; but Repentance enlightens men, and sets them at liberty. In Acts 20.20. Repentance and turning to God are put together, they are one and the same, the one cannot be without the other; but it is not any turning that doth this, but it is a turning of the judgement, and a turning of the will and affections: so that men that are turned are carried wholly from sin and wickedness, unto God, Joel 3. 12. Turn unto me (saith God) with all your heart: If it be with a piece, it is nothing worth, it is altogether deceitful.

Thirdly, Repentance is a returning to men; we must not be ashamed to acknowledge our faults one to another, James 5. 16. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another. If we have done any man wrong we ought to acknowledge it. Is it so then that Repentance flows from faith in Jesus Christ, and turns men from sin unto God: then I observe, that there are many in the world, who as yet never knew what true repentance meaneth, because

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they are yet in unbelief and without faith, without which there can be no Repentance: Men may cry bitterly and humble themselves in Sack-cloath and Ashes, as Ahab did: men may have the horrours of Hell in their consciences as Judas had: men may reform many things that are amiss, as Herod did, and yet being unbelievers, they are still in the state of impenitency. It is an infallible demonstration, that they never yet truly tasted of the love of God in the pardon of their sins, who dare presume to take liberty to sin, or delight themselves in any sin whatsoever; they that truly believe cannot, dare not allow themselves in any sin: for as faith purifies the heart, so faith and repentance keeps the heart pure, and makes the conscience tender: and the more pure the heart is, the more will it abstain from all things that are evil.

Then secondly, is repentance the gift and grace of God, whereby a believing sinner being humbled under the sight and sense of his sins, doth truly turn to God? Then we may observe that where true repentance is, there is also humiliation for sin. It is not possible that ever any soul should truly repent, that is not truly humbled and cast down in the sight and sense of his sins. Turn unto me (saith the Lord) with all your heart with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, Joel 2. 12. The Ninevites when they

repented,

repented, they humbled themselves from the highest to the lowest; and this also shews us, that the greatest part of men and women in the world never yet truly repented, because they were never yet truly humbled: It is not every kind of sorrow that works repentance, but as it is in 2 Cor. 7. 10. only godly sorrow worketh repentance, never to be repented of. And as there may be a counterfeit repentance, so there may be a counterfeit humiliation: The signs and marks of true humiliation are these. First, the soul that is truly humbled for sin, is very free in confession of sin; and the Scriptures tell us that those that have been most humbled for sin, have been the freest in confession of their sins: David, Nehemiah, Job, and others, Psal. 51. 3. saith David, I acknowledge my transgression and my sins are ever before me. And this confession of sin will be in some measure suitable to our humiliation; if our sorrow for sin be sincere, our confession will be so too: therefore all those who are less afraid to commit sin than they are ashamed to confess sin, were never yet truly humbled for sin, neither shall their souls reap any benefit by it, Prov. 28. 13. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy. They that will not find out their sins to confess them, to be sure one day or other their sins shall find them

out to torment them: If sin find us not out in youth, it will find us out in age; if it find us not out in health, yet it will find us out in sickness: if it find us not out in life, yet it will find us out in death; if it find us not out in death, yet it will find us out after death in the day of judgment: either one time or other our sins will find us out, Numb. 25. 33. Your sins (saith God) shall find you out.

Secondly, godly sorrow and humiliation for sin causeth the soul that is humbled, utterly to loath and abhor, and hate sin: Ezek. 20.43. Ye shall remember your ways and your doings wherein you have been defiled, and ye shall loath your selves in your own sight, for all your evil that you have committed. Sin is odious and hateful to an humble soul. I abhor every false way (saith David) Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law, Psal. 119. 136, 164. Nature may teach a man to loath sin in others, but 'tis only grace that teacheth us to abhor sin in our selves. When Judah Gen. 34. 24. heard that his daughter Thamar had played the harlot, he presently cast sentence of death upon her; Bring her forth (saith he) that she may be burned: But when he saw by the pledges that the sin was his own, Judah was then silent, no more talk of burning her then. A soul truly humbled, will hate sin wheresoever it is, especially in his own bosom;

bolom; men will fly from venemous and hurtful creatures wheresoever they are, especially if they be near them, because they are then in most danger to be hurt by them, all the sins of the world cannot do a soul so much hurt as his own sins; then they that do not hate sin in themselves, are not truly humbled for sin.

Thirdly, he that is truly humbled is willing to take shame to himself; the humble sinner is willing to be ashamed of his folly: Ezek. 16.63. That thou mayest remember and be ashamed, and never open thy mouth more, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.

Fourthly, a true humble soul will be willing to receive the word of God with all readiness: what's the reason men are no more humbled for sin? Surely this, because they despise or neglect the good word of God, which is the only means to get humility: the humble penitent soul is the most tractable and teachable soul in the world, and he above all others is willing to embrace the word of God.

Fifthly, a true humble soul is ready and willing to put in practice all those duties which he hath formerly learned out of the word of God: When Paul was once truly humbled, he conferred not any longer with flesh and blood, but laying aside all carnal reasonings, goes on thowly

rowly in his work of preaching the Gospel, Gal. 1. 16. Thus you may see that where true repentance is, there is also a true humiliation and sorrow for sin; then every one learn to be humbled, and that betimes: for as Women, the longer they are ere they bring forth children, the harder is their labor; even so they that put off repentance to old age, must expect the sorer travel. Lamentably are they mistaken, who put off their repentance to their old age: is it likely that the pains and weakness of old age will be any advantage or ease to thy repentance? Rev. 16. 19 it's said, that at the pouring forth of the fourth viol, when God smote the inhabitants of the earth with a scorching heat, that they blasphemed the name of God, and repented not. It is a woful thing to put off repentance to a pained body or to a sick bed: pain in its own nature fits rather to blaspheme, and turn from God, than to return to God, and its very common that sick persons either repent not at all, or if they do, at the best their repentance is but a sickly repentance: sickness doth only abate and restrain the power of mens lusts, it never destroys the life of sin, death it self cannot kill sin; wicked mens sins live when they are dead, the grave cannot consume them, nor the fire of hell: the sins of unbelievers remain not only in their guilt, but in their power to all eternity.

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Is it so then, that Repentance is a turning from sin unto God, then I observe that there can be no true repentance where sin is delighted in: he that lives in the love and practice of any sin, knoweth not what repentance meaneth, for repentance takes off the heart from the love of sin, and works it to such a dislike of sin, that it abhors the very occasion of sin; if sin comes and tells a gracious penitent soul of the profits and pleasures of sin, O saith a gracious heart, the sweetness will prove bitterness in the latter end. True repentance takes off the heart from all sin, as well small as great, not from some few sins, but from all sin, for he that turns not from all, turns from none in truth: and it is not enough to turn from all sin, but we must turn from the commands of sin and Satan unto the commands of God; from worldliness, to heavenly mindedness; from pride, to humility; from hatred and envy, to love: the Tree that bears not good fruit will be hewen down and cast into the fire, as well as the Tree that bears ill fruit. I beseech you therefore brethren in the bowels of mercy, for the Lords sake I entreat every one of you that desire to be saved, that you would turn away from all your iniquities, and that speedily, lest your repentance be too late: and to this end, be earnest with God by prayer, for the assistance of his Spirit in the

subduing of thy sins, and cast thy self wholly upon the Lord.

Every true Penitent is wholly the Lords, the desire of his soul is to God, and to the remembrance of his name: with his soul he desires God in the night, and with his spirit within him, he seeketh the Lord in the morning, Isa. 26.8,9. He is now a constant suitor at the throne of grace, and with full purpose of heart he cleaves to God, and loves the place where his honour dwells, Psal. 26. 8. All his desire is to know more of God, and how he may love him more and serve him better; the service and servants of God, how joyful are they to his soul: He takes all opportunities of doing good, he keeps his heart with all diligence, and the door of his lips that he offend not with his tongue, Psal. 39. 1. His heart is so inflamed with the love of God, that he endeavours with all his might to shew forth the praises of the Lord. By which it appears, that a turning to God, is not barely a turning from sin, but a practising of good and a walking upright before the Lord in all well pleasing all our dayes.

Is it so then that repentance is needful and absolutely necessary for all persons; in what a sad condition then are the greatest part of men and women in the world, who as yet are as far from true repentance as light is from darkness,

and

and yet poor souls, they smooth themselves up with this conceit, that God is mercifull, and they hope to be saved as well as the best, & they thank God all is well with them; and yet notwithstanding they never repented of their sins: true repentance is a grace almost out of fashion in these self conceited times, wherein mens minds are so much running after novelties and outward formalities; but the power of holiness, and the doctrine of repentance and self-mortification, these are not minded; nay by many are accounted Legal and altogether needless.

There are three sorts of people that I shall have occasion to speak of in the use of this Point: and the first are such as altogether abhor repentance, the second are such, as although they acknowledge repentance is needful, and necessary for others, yet think that they themselves have no need of it; and the third sort are such as do confess, that repentance is needful even for themselves as well as others, but not yet, it's time enough hereafter, there's no such haste of it. And I hope in the handling of these three sorts of persons I shall make it appear that repentance is needful and necessary at all times for all sorts. Having done this, I shall remove some lets that hinder men from repentance, and so give you some few Motives to stir you up to repentance; and then to wind up all

in a few words of Application.

I begin with the first of these, those that abhor repentance; and they are wilful sinners, such as go on in sin, and make it even their trade to sin: wilful, desperate, and dissolute wretches, that laugh at repentance, who declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not, Isaiah 3.6. Who will not be brought to abandon their wicked wayes, but go on still in swearing and curſing, lying and blaspheming, whoredome, drunkennesse, and all uncleannesse, and that with greedinesse, as the Apostle saith, Who mock at faith and repentance, as those scoffers did in 2 Pet. 3.4. These are they as St. Peter saith, 2 Pet 2. That walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleannesse, and count it pleasure to riot in the day time; whose eyes are full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin: O but the latter end of these men is worse than their beginning. How many wicked wretches are there, that live as if they had made a covenant with death and hell, and were at an agreement with the grave, who had rather hazard their souls than leave their sins, who as if there were neither Heaven nor Hell, run on from one sin to another. Come (say they) we will fetch wine and fil our selves with strong drink, and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. But Isa. 56. 12. Wo unto them (saith the Prophet) they have rewarded evil to themselves.

selves. How little do these men think, that God will one day wound the hairy scalp of such as go on in sin: and that tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish shall be upon every soul that doth evil, Rom. 2. 9. Let men slight repentance never so much, a time will come when they shall repent, but that too late, even in hell fire for ever. For sin must be repented of, if not on earth, yet in hell; and if you will not loath your companions in sin here, you shall loath them in hell hereafter, your pot companions and your harlot companions shall loath one another in Hell: Then those bloody wounds shall bleed which you have given your souls in the days of your jollity and pride, and in the times of your desperate impieties; when nothing but wrath and horror of Conscience shall appear before you; then those sweet morsels of sin which have been as sweet as hony to your lustful appetites, shall be vomited up as the bitterest and loathsomest things in the world. Consider this all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you, Psal. 50. 22. Be willing to forsake your sins, for sin and the soul must part, or else hell and the soul shall meet together: The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God, Psal. 9. 17 O that you would seriously lay these things to heart, and now, even now in this your day, tha:

that ye would know the things that belong unto your everlasting peace. To day if you will hear my voice (saith God in the 95 Psalm) harden not your hearts. Slight not, scorn not, resist not the good word of God, that invites you to repentance, but break off your sins by repentance and turn to God in righteousness.

And now for the second sort, and they are such as think they need no repentance: and they are such as are either morally civil and honest before men, or else formal, and hypocritical professours, who seem to be, and are not, who profess God with their lips but deny him in their lives: O they have no need of repentance, they are no drunkards, nor swearers, nor such like: God I thank thee (said the proud Pharisee) I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, Luke 18. 11. These are such as profess God and know much of the mind of God, and therefore have no need of repentance, they are guilty of no sins to repent of: But of these it may be said as Peter said of Elimas the sorcerer, Acts. 13. 10. That they are full of subtilty, and enemies to all righteousness, who never yet knew what sin meant. For they that think they have no sins left to repent of, it's a clear argument that they never yet truly repented themselves of any one sin at all, but that they are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity: For

repen-

repentance is a continued act, and a grace that must have its daily operation, as faith and love must continue, so must repentance; when once the rocky heart of a sinner is smitten by God, the water of repentance will abundantly flow; sincere Repentants cannot content themselves with one act or two of repentance, but they must daily renew their repentance, for sin will renew, so must repentance, renewed sins must have renewed repentance, till we have done sinning (and that will not be till we have done living) we must not have done repenting: if there be a leak in the ship, the water must be pumpt out, else the ship is in danger of sinking: we are leaking vessels all of us, yea the best of us sin leaks in daily, and is renewed daily, and there must be the pump of repentance to carry it out daily, else our souls will be in danger of sinking. And for the other sort who think they need repentance, they are pure morall honest men, who live in a course of civility, and take their penny to be as white as any others, these are as good as the best, and therefore have no need to be any better; they are not desperately wicked as many are, they are no blasphemers, nor drunkards, they go to Church and give every man his due, and are loving to their neighbours, and what need any more. It's true, these things are necessary, and are acquired in a Christian;

stian: but yet civility without activity, at the best is but guilded Atheisme; morality & seeming vertues are but guilded sins and glittering abominations: the Lord seeth many a rotten, base, stinking heart under a civil coat. If civility and morality would have served the turn, then the Pharisees would have gone to Heaven before any other; they were civilly honest, they were no Swearers nor Drunkards, they paid tythes and gave Almes, and prayed often; and carried themselves so exact in the world, that it was thought that if but two persons in the world should go to heaven, a Scribe should be one, and a Pharisee the other. But what saith Christ? Matth. 5.20. Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And yet their righteousness far exceeded the righteousness of all our moral honest men; Let a man be never so honest in outward appearance, let his carriage and behaviour be never so specious and plausible in the sight of the world, let him be never so exact and just in his dealings with men, ye if he be not renewed in the spirit of the mind, he is never the better for this. If he be not a sanctified Christian, the word of truth never as yet came home to his soul, in the power of it; he is still in the state of nature, and without God, and as yet far from repentance and salvation.

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And then there is third sort of impenitents, and they are such as are convinced of the necessity of repentance, but they do not think it a time now to repent; they believe they must repent, but all in good time, there's no hast of it yet, it will be time enough hereafter; at the hour of death, when age and sickness is upon them; and they think its a thing of nothing to repent, they can do it when they list, it's done with a wet finger, there needs no more but to say Lord have mercy upon me, when they are going out of the world, this is the general disease with which most men are infected. But let such men know, that it is a hard matter to repent, and sin is very powerful; and if they do not seek to get it subdued in the strength of their days, it will be too hard for them at the last: for although men grow weaker and weaker, yet sin grows stronger and stronger; and being (as we say) bred in the bone, nursed up by us in our youthful days, it will not easily be rooted out of the flesh. Can the Blackamore change his skin, or the Leopard his spots, Jer. 13.23. So they cannot; no more can they that are accustomed to do evil, leave it when they list.

If repentance be a thing so easy, how is it that many who sought after it could never obtain it? How many are there that have roared

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and cryed in the bitterness of their souls, and in the horror of their conscience, that they could not repent. O that I could repent, O that my hard heart would break in pieces! This hath been the crys of many. It is not in the power of man to repent when he pleases, doth God give us space to repent now, it may be he will not do it to morrow: a man by nature as he cannot of himself, so he hath no inclination of himself to Repentance. Repentance is a hard work, a circumcision of the heart, and casting of sin out of the soul, which indeed will make the heart to bleed: which thing no natural man is either willing or able to do. Mortifie (saith the Apostle, Col. 3. 5.) your members which are upon earth; which thing suits not with a natural man. Let no man then put off Repentance upon such foolish wicked thoughts as these, that repentance is an easy work, which a man may perform when he pleases, such sinful thoughts as these will deceive you: Thou that wilt not repent now thou mayest, when thou wouldest, it may be, thou shalt not be permitted: you that will not repent when God gives space, how justly may he when thou wouldest, deny it thee, because when it was offered to thee thou refusedst, Ezek. 24. 13. Because I would have purged thee, and thou was not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness, saith the Lord. The

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longer men live in sin, the stronger will sin grow in them; he that will not leave sin when he is young, will hardly leave it when he is old. It is said of wicked men, in Job 20. 11. Their bones are full of the sins of their youth, which lie down with them in the dust. Not that mens sins are buried with them in their graves, for then they might be happy, but that they continue with them till death, yea after death. Many a time and often hath the Lord stood at the door of mens Consciences, and knocked to come in, Rev. 3. 10. Behold I stand at the door and knock, (saith Christ.) Do not let God wait long, he hath waited a long time already to be gracious unto thee, Isa. 30. 18. Do not give the Devil the prime and strength of your days, and then think to serve God in your old age: You do not leave sin in this, but sin leaves you: you have not the strength and power to sin then as you have had, but still your hearts are as bad as ever they were; then put not off your repentance till sickness comes. Happy, yea thrice happy is that man, and blessed shall he be, that in the time of his youth and health furnisheth his heart and soul with comfort against the evil day; happy is that soul, who when age and sickness comes, is so fitted for death by repentance that when death comes he hath nothing else to do but to dye. Be perswaded then to repent be-

times before you go hence and be no more seen; there is no time ours but the present time, we do not know whether we shall live another day, another night: many that are in health one day, are brought to their graves the next. Our life (saith St James) is but a vapour that appeareth for a little time, Jam 4. 14. we are no sooner born, but we begin to dye. But not your selves off then from day to day, he that's unfit or unwilling to repent to day, will be so to morrow, therefore seek the Lord while he may be found, Isa. 55. 6. There's a time when God will not be found: Prov. 1. 24 to ver. 30. saith God, Because I called & ye refused, & set at naught all my counsel & would none of my reproof; therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh, when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall ye call on me but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord therefore shall they eat the fruit of their wayes, & be filled with their own devices. There is a time when mercy may be had, but if we neglect that time, it will not be recovered again though it be sought for with tears: there is a time, when with the wise Virgins we may enter into the wedding, but if we take not that time, we may with the foolish ones have the door shut against us, Mat. 25. Then may we knock

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and call, yea, cry Lord, Lord, open to us, but the Lord shall say unto you, I know you not. The old World had a long time of repentance, a hundred and twenty years did Noah preach repentance to them, and yet they repented not: but the Ninevites they had but a short time given them, but forty days, and yet they repented: they make the Day of Repentance whilest the Sun of Gods patience shined upon them.

God is not bound to wait mens leasure, the Soul is but a tenant at will, and may suddenly be turned out of doors, and when you lye upon your sick beds, the Lord may fill your hearts with such fears, as may make your consciences altogether despair of mercy. God sent you his servants early and late, in season and out of season, to invite you to repent; but you will repent you say hereafter, you will if you can, you hope God will work it in you. What ground have you of this hope? hath God made you any such promise? Thou canst not draw out the thread of thy life one minute, for ought thou knowest this may be thy last day, the tenders of mercy, and the offers of grace are at an end when thy life ends, if not before: you know that time and tide stays no mans leasure; every one is so wise as to take time and tide for worldly affairs: will any man be so foolish as to defer the time of his sowing till harvest? men

will not be carrying out of dung, when they should be fetching in of Corn; no, they will dispatch those things first which are of most necessity. And is there any thing of more necessity than the salvation of your souls? will your souls be saved without repentance? or can you repent when you will? But you will say, you are young, and therefore may be born with a while, which is the Devils divinity; for young men have no more liberty allowed them to sin, or to put off repentance, than old men have, it's the Devils policy to infuse this into thy brains, that he may ensnare thee. It was the commendation of Timothy, that from a Child he had known the holy Scriptures, 1 Tim. 1. Young Saints, say some, but not the word of God, prove old Devils: But I am sure it is a rare thing to see an old sinner become a young Saint. When the Devil & sin hath Lorded in your souls, yea, tyrannized both over soul and body, for thirty or forty years together, do you think then that a little groaning or crying, Lord have mercy upon me, will be able to dispossess him at the last, he having gotten too strong a footing in your soul to be beaten out of his quarters so easily; He that will not remember God when he is young and living, it's great to be feared God will be unmindful of him when he is old and dying. Therefore once more I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, speedily

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to set about the work of repentance, lest when it is too late you repent, weep, and mourn, that you repented not before. Do not say of repentance as Felix said to Paul, Thou wilt repent when thou art better at leasure, another time shall serve the turn; it may be thou mayest not live to another time, or if thou livest, thy heart may then be as hard, if not harder than now it is. Would you not in the day of the Lord be in a worse condition than heathens or infidels are? Then repent. Would you not when you are dead be in a worse condition than toads or serpents? then repent.

It may be said of every impenitent sinner, as Christ said of Judas in the 29 of Matthew, and the 24 verse. It had been better for that man if he had never been born. Heathens in the day of judgment shall be in a better condition than impenitent Christians, for they shall have a lesser condemnation, because of their ignorance; who it may be would have done better if they had known more. It shall be more tolerable (saith our Saviour) for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for thee Capernaum, Thou England that art exalted up to heaven in Gospel-mercies, take heed and beware lest thou be not thrown down to hell in Gospel-vengeance.

I should now shew you the nets that hin-

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der men from Repentance, and so endeavour to remove them; but I shall only name them, and so conclude with some few Motives to stir you up to repentance. Now the lets that keep men off from Repentance, are either from Sin and Satan, or else from our selves and the World; the Devil perswades men that repentance is a needless work, and men need not trouble themselves with it, for those that God hath ordained to live shall be saved, let them live never so loosely; and those that he hath appointed for wrath shall be damned, let them repent never so much. But to remove this let out of the way, know this; that all those, that God hath ordained to salvation, shall sooner or later, more or less, be brought to embrace the means. In the 13. of the Acts and the 48. As many as were ordained to Eternal life believed. God hath joyned the end and the means together, and cursed is he that dares to separate them: Salvation without Repentance is impossible; without holiness no man shall see God, Heb. 5. 19. A second way by which the Devil keeps men off from Repentance, is Gods mercy; God is merciful, saith the Devil, his mercy is over all his works, and he that made you will not damn you, you need not to fear it. True it is, even to wicked men God is merciful, but these are but mercies on the left hand,

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common mercies, it's a mercy to men that they live, it's a mercy that we were not born monsters, and it's a mercy to have outward enjoyments, but what are these to the peculiar mercies of God: It was a good speech of a godly man, saith he, He that made thee without thee, will not save thee without thee; if thou art in a ditch, and wilt do no more to come out but cry, God help me, thou mayest lye and perish. Do not dare to go on in sin, because God is merciful. Shall we sin (saith St. Paul) that grace may abound? no God forbid. I dare not, saith a gracious heart: If ever you would partake of mercy, you must depart from iniquity, 2 Tim. 2. 19. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. I dare boldly say, that if all the clouds of heaven should continually showre down mercy, there should not so much as one drop fall upon any impenitent person.

Thirdly, the Devil labours to keep men off from repentance by bringing them to despair of mercy, if he cannot work men into presumption by the consideration of Gods mercies, he will do what he can to bring them into desperation, by telling them that mercy is out of date: But let not this hinder thy repentance, for as it cannot be too soon to repent, so it's never too late to repent, better late than never. I do not speak this that any should neglect to repent be-

times, but that none should ever despair of mercy, and thereby be hindred from this duty of repentance. A second let that hinders repentance is the world, the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, the pleasures and preferments of the world; these fight against the spirit, and resist the work of repentance; Voluptuousness and Drunkennes unfit men for repentance, therefore these must be abstained from (1 Pet. 2. 11.) As things that war against the soul. Mortifie therefore (saith the Apostle) your members which are upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, &c. Col. 3. 5. these must be mortified. And then a third let that keeps men from repentance is sin; sin hath such a commanding power over the souls of unregenerate persons. So that (as it is Rom. 6. 10.) they give themselves over as servants to sin and to uncleanness. O then for the Lords sake, avoid all occasion of sin: Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield your selves unto God, as instruments of righteousness, Rom. 6. 12, 13. Verses. O that I could prevail with you, and that the Lord would perswade your hearts of the dreadful soulful condition of all impenitent sinners. Consider I beseech you in the fear of the Lord these following considerations, and first

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of all know this, you that live in the love of sin you live in the hatred of God; for the love of God and the love of sin cannot possibly dwell together, and they that dwell in it shall never dwell with God, Psal. 15. saith David, Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness. And the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. 6. 9. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And Psalm 97. Ye that love the Lord hate evil. Also 2 Tim. 2. 19. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. Secondly, all those that sin, or are under the power and command of sin are of the Devil: For he that commits sin (saith St. John) is of the Devil, John 3. 9. And is it not a sad thing to be under the power of the devil? Every wicked man is the devils slave, and he doth the devils drudgery: where ever sin is in the love of it, there is also the devil; the devil keeps Court in wicked mens hearts. Thirdly, sin is the high way to destruction, Is not destruction to the wicked? saith Job, Chap. 31. 3. Yes that it is, And a strange punishment to the work-

ers of iniquity. Fourthly and lastly, sin brought wrath and condemnation upon the soul: If ye live after the flesh ye shall dye, Ro. 8. 13 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the Nations that forget God, Psal. 9. 17. These things being considered and seriously taken to heart, methinks should not only awaken sinners out of their sleepy security, but also provoke them to repentance. And then there is another let which hinders men from repentance, and that is in themselves, which is of all other the greatest let; for did not our base hearts deceive us, the Devil, the world, and sin, could never hinder us from coming to God by repentance, & these lets from our selves are either from ignorance or hardness of heart, Eph. 4. 18. Men, saith the Apostle, through the ignorance that is in them, & through the hardness of their hearts, being past feeling, have given themselves over our lasciviousness, and to work all uncleanness with greediness. Ignorance must needs be a great let to repentance, no wonder when men know not the danger of sin, nor y necessity of repentance, that they live in sin, and never come to repentance; who is there y seeks for, that he knoweth not of? impenitent sinners do but know what a dangerous condition they were in without repentance, they would never suffer their eyes to sleep, nor their eye-lids to slumber, before they had made their peace with

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God by repentance: O even for the Lords sake get acquaintance with God and learn to know what an odious thing sin is, Job 22.21. Acquaint now thy self with God, and be at peace, thereby good shall come upon thee, thereby thou mayest be brought to repentance. Then secondly, there's in us hardness of heart, which is indeed a work of repentance. It is said of Zedechiah, 2 Chron. 36. 13. That he hardned his heart that he might not turn to the Lord his God. And this hardness of heart is very lamentable, because all the means which God uses to soften, work not upon it at all. And Pharaoh hardened his heart, & would not let the children of Israel go, Ex. 8.32. All the sore judgments of God upon him could not prevail with his hard heart, he would not let them go; so wicked men whose hearts are hardned they will not let their sins go, neither the judgments, nor the mercies of God will prevail with wicked men to turn them from their sins, Amos 4.12. saith God, Though I have sent among you judgment upon judgment, plague famine and noisom beasts, yet have you not returned unto me. Therefore I beseech you, in love to your poor souls, that by prayer you would beg of God to give you softned hearts, that may melt and tremble at the word of God, lest by going on in your sins, ye bring upon your selves swift destruction. And so I come to give you

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some means and motives to stir you up to repentance, and so I shall conclude.

The first and principal means of working repentance where it is not, is the word of God; Mat. 5. 17. And Jesus began to preach, and to say Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Christ's first Sermon was a Sermon of Repentance, therefore if ever you would repent of your sins, attend upon the word of God. What a woful sad condition are those in that want the word of God: what the Preacher said. Eccles. 11. 6. In the morning (saith he) sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; so say I of hearing the word of God: Hear it in the morning, and hear it in the afternoon; hear it on the Lords-day, & hear it in the Week-day, take all opportunities of hearing the word of God.

And then a second help is, to consider the goodness and power of God, his almighty, and his all-seeing eye; consider God sees & knows all thy ways, and is able to punish thee for all thy sins: if men were but convinced of this truth, they durst not sin so boldly as they do. But I pass by this to give you some few Evidences of the truth of repentance, and they are briefly these.

First, the soul that hath truly repented is very careful to avoid even the occasion of sin, and keeps himself at a distance both from sin and sinners,

ners, he will dispense with no sin at all, but will say as Ephraim did, What have I to do any more with sin? And secondly, he that is truly turned from sin unto God, will endeavour to turn others also, he is not content that he himself is turned to God, but he will draw others to God also. Thirdly, he that hath truly repented is very careful to furnish himself against the assaults of the devil. The word (saith David, Ps. 119. 11.) have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. A true repentant treasures up the word of God in his heart, and walks worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, being fruitful unto every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, Col. 1. 10. They do it, as it is in Ps. 119. 23. They keep the testimony of God, and seek him with their whole heart. They also do no iniquity they walk in his ways. Their delight is in the law of God, and in his law they do meditate day and night, Ps. 1. 2. Fourthly, he that hath truly repented, is full of holy indignation against sin and turns it quite out of doors, he cannot endure the sight of it. Fifthly, he that hath truly repented is full of fear, he is filled with an awful reverential fear of the Majesty of God, and he is afraid of displeasing God by sin. Sixthly, a true penitent is full of holy and heavenly desires. He desires more of God, and more acquaintance with the ways of God, more

more communion with God in Ordinances. Seventhly, true penitents are very zealous for God: O how do I love thy Law, saith David in the 119. Psalm. A godly man cannot endure to see God dishonored: as it is said of Lot in the second of Peter 2.8. He vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. And then lastly, where true repentance is wrought it will work a holy change in the soul; and whereas sin was formerly delighted in, the true penitent hath it in Indignation; they will not only turn sin out of doors, but also are ready to cut it in pieces as it were: true penitents have a feeling on their hearts for sin, and will loath themselves for the evil of their ways. It is a hard thing for a man to loath himself, every man naturally loves himself, but true penitents loath and abhor themselves, as Job did. A repentant eye sees matter enough in himself of self abhorency: Repentance lets us see what black defiled creatures we are by nature. Ezek. 20.43. You shall remember your ways, (saith the Lord) and shall loath your selves in your own sight. And so much for the Evidences of Repentance.

Is it so then, that repentance is so absolutely necessary to salvation, and that there is a great danger in putting it off from day to day; and that a sick bed repentance is no repentance, or

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at most but a sickly repentance: how highly then doth it concern every one of us even to day while it is called to day, to begin our repentance, and not only to begin, but to persevere in it to the end of our days: Let the time past of our lives suffice us to have wrought our own wills, and to have walked in our own ways; and let us resolve for the time to come to live unto God, and be not weary, for in due season thou shalt reap if thou faint not. Make repentance thy daily work, that so thy peace may be made with God, and when thou comest to die, thou mayest have nothing else to do but to die. He that labours not to kill sin by repentance in his life, will be very unfit to die when death comes, death is only welcome to a gracious penitent soul: they are not fit to die in whom sin is not killed by Repentance; they have done nothing of that work which God sent them into the world to do, that have not repented: Repentance sweetens our lives, and takes away the bitterness of death, and only to penitent sinners is mercy promised. Consider there is an absolute necessity of repentance we cannot be saved except we repent; Except ye repent (saith Christ) ye shall all likewise perish, Luke 13. 3. Consider all thy life is but short: thou hast but a little time to live in the world, thou hast need to bestir thy self then, to

to husband thy time to the best advantage of thy soul; thy precious and immortal soul will be in danger of hell fire, if thou repent not: for no repentance, no salvation; and if thou dost not repent thee here of thy sins, thou wilt surely to thy cost repent thee hereafter in hell for thy neglect of repentance; thou wilt then curse the day wherein thou didst despise repentance; then if there be any love in thee to thy precious soul, whatever thou doest, repent. Consider also the end, for which Christ came into the world, Mat. 9. 13. I came (saith Christ) to call sinners to repentance. Be zealous therefore and repent, and as John saith, Mat. 3. 8. Let us all labour to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Now the Lord work these truths upon your hearts, and the Lord give every one of us repentance unto life, repentance never to be repented of: Which the Lord of his infinite mercy grant unto us all. To whom be Glory & Honour for ever, Amen.

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